



Carl Vinson VA Medical Center

VINSON VOICE

June 2014

“Honoring Service, Empowering Health”

www.dublin.va.gov

From the Director . . .



John S. Goldman, *Director*

Welcome to the June 2014 *Vinson Voice*! This issue is packed with information about VA services and programs and special features about our history and that of Veterans and related topics. We hope that you enjoy the magazine, but we also want your input, so please let our editor know what you would like to see us cover.

**HONORING SERVICE
EMPOWERING
HEALTH**

Summer is finally here, which means that our Veterans and staff will go out to enjoy the warm weather. I want everyone to have a good time but please be safe. June is National Safety Month so it is an excellent time to recall that along with nice weather come related dangers that we all need to be aware of, such as increased traffic, potential injury related to swimming and boating, and, of course, health-related dangers that may come from exposure to the sun and extreme heat. Again, go out and enjoy the fun that summertime offers but please be aware of possible dangers and take reasonable precautions against them. Use drive carefully, watch the kids closely, use sunscreen, and get plenty of water.

Also in June we celebrate LGBT Pride Month. It is not unusual to see controversial topics in the media about LGBT rights, but at VA we honor all who served and their loved ones because we know that diversity is not only the lifeblood of a democratic society, it is what keeps VA and our medical center vibrant and creative, preconditions for giving our very best for America's heroes. One of the singular strengths of VA is that we do not judge, we simply do everything that we can to make sure that our Veterans and Veteran supporters get what they need to ensure the best quality of healthcare and other services that we can provide. Let us all remember that it is diversity that will make VA responsive enough to be the provider of choice for Veterans throughout the 21st century. Thank you for supporting all of our Veterans!

John S. Goldman
Medical Center Director

To care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow, and his orphan . . .

President Abraham Lincoln, 2nd Inaugural Address

Mission . . . To improve the health status of Veterans . . .

Vision . . . To be the provider of choice for Veterans . . .



In This Issue . . .

The Vinson Voice

June 2014

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Dublin VA Medical Center



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Arlington National Cemetery 150 Years of Caring for America's Fallen Heroes

by Darlene Richardson, VA Historian

At Arlington national Cemetery, America's respect for its military Veterans is on display every day.

As VA, thousands of volunteers, and the nation come together to commemorate Memorial Day and honor the fallen patriots of all our nation's wars, we recognize the 150th anniversary of Arlington National Cemetery. Arlington was not the first national cemetery established in our nation, but it has certainly become one of the most revered and familiar of the national cemeteries.

What we know today as Arlington National Cemetery was, in 1861, the residence of General Robert E. Lee and his wife, Mary Anna Randolph Custis Lee. Lee's wife inherited the 1,100 acre plantation known as "Arlington" from her father several years earlier. Their house was situated on a picturesque knoll overlooking the Potomac River and was a very short ride by coach or horseback to the White House and downtown Washington. Once the American Civil War began in April 1861, the Arlington estate—home of the "enemy's" general--was decidedly too close to the U.S. president and Congress for comfort. One hundred and fif-

ty-three years ago this month, as the state of Virginia seceded from the Union just weeks before the First Battle of Manassas, Mary Lee packed her belongings to vacate her beloved home as Federal troops were on their way. She feared that "this will be the scene of conflict and my beautiful home endeared by a thousand associations may become a field of carnage." Federal troops occupied Lee's estate for the entirety of the war. On July 17, 1862, in the midst of the Civil War, Congress authorized America's first national

cemeteries as final resting places to honor the Union dead who fought and died to keep the country united as one nation. Congress charged the U.S. Army Quartermaster, General Montgomery C. Meigs, with selecting and

developing national cemeteries and overseeing burials of the dead. Many of the first national cemeteries were crudely started on battlefields during the war; their iconic fences, gates, pathways, monuments, and beautiful landscaping, so familiar to us now, came later after the Civil War ended. Meigs designed the superintendent lodges built at many of the early national cemeteries.

By 1864 the government had legally purchased the property at auction, set up two forts (Fort Whipple/now Fort Myer and Fort McPher-



Attending to America's heroes at Arlington c. 1929



son), and General Meigs had started a cemetery on the estate, despite concerns about what the Lee family would do after the war. Private William Christman of the 67th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry was the first known Union soldier buried there on May 13, 1864. By the war's end roughly 16,000 Union soldiers, including U.S. Colored Troops, nearly 4,000 African American "contrabands," and some Confederates were buried on the Arlington estate. Even General Meigs' son, killed in October 1864, was buried on the grounds.

After the war, Arlington National Cemetery became a national shrine as the preferred burial grounds for many of America's presidents, political and military leaders, and service members. The Lee's never returned to live in their home. Even General Meigs, himself, was buried at Arlington National Cemetery in 1894.

Congress approved the first-ever government-funded headstones for Confederate soldiers at Arlington National Cemetery in 1900 and by 1929 Confederate graves *anywhere* were eligible to be marked with government headstones.

In 1973, the Army transferred all but two of its national cemeteries to VA. Army retained ownership of Arlington National Cemetery and Soldiers Home Cemetery (D.C.) and oversee them to this day. Army's former national cemeteries and soldiers lots, plus new cemeteries built since then, are the responsibility of VA's National Cemetery Administration. •

Links:

<http://www.nps.gov/arho/historyculture/cemetery.htm>

<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/how-arlington-national-cemetery-came-to-be-145147007/?no-ist>

<http://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/arlington-marks-150th-anniversary-burial-23691511>

http://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/History/Minorities/Minor_BlackHistory.aspx

<http://www.cfm.va.gov/historic/superintendent.htm>



Superior Customer Service Tip

How Many Smiles Do You Collect Each Day? How Habitual Superior Customer Service Behaviors Can Lead to Organizational Excellence

by Gregory J. Swars Sr., CVVAMC Customer Service Instructor

It is easy to think of things like common courtesy, smiling, and friendliness as “soft” skills that do not have much real world effect. Think again!

Smiling, waving, being helpful, assisting customers with their concerns. Such customer service considerations are often relegated to the periphery of our thinking when it comes to how we do business, yet doing so may well be the biggest mistake that organizations are currently making, and healthcare is no exception.

The research on providing superior customer service is clear: engaging customers through behaviors such as smiling, using enthusiastic greetings, and other welcoming acts actually leads to an enhanced perception of organizations on the part of their customers, including employees. It is not, however, enough to simply pay lip service to such customer service techniques, they must be systematized and staff must commit to using them habitually.

The truth is that virtually everyone agrees that being friendly and courteous to customers is the right thing to do (it is the rare person who will actually claim otherwise), so why aren't such behaviors more common? In fact, why would we ever deviate from them at all?

VA folks are busy. *Very* busy. Taking care of America's heroes at the level of quality we are committed to is not easy and requires tremendous, unrelenting effort. Still, it is the rare individual who would be opposed to pursuing only excellence when it comes to our Veterans healthcare, and a true VA professional would

never even suggest it. However, working to reach the level of excellence that we want to see can lead us to see our work as routine and formulaic, and that is where customer service excellence gets lost.

Ironically, as requirements increase and resources dwindle, providing superior customer service can actually make our work lives easier rather than herder. Happy customers are not less demanding and do more for themselves, but they

are more likely to ignore minor problems and be understanding of more serious issues. When superior customer service is in place and habitually employed, customers and employees benefit since a “team mentality” prevails. Veterans, their families, and VA staff work together to ensure that the best healthcare outcomes are achieved.



Having established the unquestionable value of providing the highest quality service at all times, the question next becomes, what is the best way to get started?

Obviously, quality of work is critical, as is being a problem solver and making certain that when a customer has a need we follow through until we leave the customer satisfied. CVVAMC folks are good at this stuff! But what often gets missed are the seemingly smaller things that, as it turns out, are most important of all, and the most important is probably learning how to smile.

Some people would retort that no one has to learn how to smile. After all, babies do it without being taught. Take a look around as you walk through the medical center, though, and see how many people are not smiling, fail to meet people's gaze, and even more that do not say "Hello!" or "How are you?" You may be surprised. The reality is that you have to cultivate your smile. Make a habit of smiling, interacting, and engaging your customers—Veterans, families, and your co-workers—with a big smile. Once you start, you'll find that you are suddenly "collecting" smiles.

Smile collecting starts when you use the right bait, in this case, a smile of your own. When you smile and engage others, most of them will return a smile. Now, the concept of the tipping point postulated by Malcom Gladwell states that when you start a positive habit or action, eventually, if you stay the course, you'll reach a point where everyone else starts behaving similarly. In the case of smiles, once you reach the tipping point, suddenly you have an entire medical center full of friendly people who are smiling, greeting their customers, striving for excellence, and wanting to create an environment of congeniality.



When that happens, stress lessens and morale goes up, and you find yourself working in a place that is happy to be in, a huge advantage when you consider how many hours, days, and years you will be here. And less stress leads to a happier, healthier you who will live longer and more contentedly. So, in the end, developing superior customer service habits not only benefits others, it benefits you directly. A win-win if there ever was one!

And there is another huge advantage to you once you have gained superior customer service skills—career success. Smart managers are not looking for potential teammates with technical skills. Let's face it, our rigorous HR processes ensure that we get jib candidates with the technical skills to do the job. What smart managers want to do is hire people with superior customer service skills because when they do so they know that they will get a team player who will make life easier on everyone. And the best way to make yourself marketable as a customer service professional that managers want to hire is to develop positive habits every day by, you guessed it, smiling and being friendly. It sounds easy, and it is!

Ultimately, being the best VA healthcare professional you can be requires developing the superior customer service and interpersonal skills needed to survive and thrive in 21st century healthcare, and only those people who develop such skills will make it because healthcare is rapidly being a consumer-driven industry. Yet the good news is that you don't need special training or college degrees to make it in modern healthcare, just start working on being a customer service professional, and get to work collecting smiles!•



Congratulations to **Rhonda Tillman, RN**, HBPC RN case manager, on earning her bachelor of science degree from Chamberlain College of Nursing! She was also inducted into the Sigma Theta Tau International



Ms. Tillman

Honor Society of Nursing. Her achievement

not only allows her to become the best that she can be but demonstrates a commitment to being the best VA professional that she can be. Good work, Rhonda!



Ms. Constant and Ms. Walker

Congratulations to **Ms. Willette Davenport, RN**, who passed her registered nurse (RN) board examination on May 9. Good job, Willette!

Congratulations to **Chiquail Walker, MBA, BHSA, LPN** and **Zenaida Constant, MBA, BHCA**! Both recently received their Master of Business Admin-

istration degrees from Wesleyan College. As a highlight, Chiquail and Zenaida were able to travel to Rome, Italy, Dubai, the United Arab Emirates to study the business, social, political, economic, organizational, and cultural factors associated with international business and investment. Studying these diverse cultures, along with the knowledge from the degree program, has enhanced both Chiquail and Zenaida's vocational skills and their ability to care for our diverse population of Veterans. Good job!

Carl Vinson VA Medical Center Memorial Day 2014



“Let Me Tell You About Me!”

Superior Interview Skills Can Help You Get the Job You Want

by Dana Doles, MBA, Executive Assistant to the Director

For many career aspirants, interviewing is either formality or something to be feared, but honing your interview skills can mean the difference between career stagnation and the career that you want.

If you've ever interviewed for a job, you've probably experienced the “post-interview blues,” that sinking feeling as you walk out the door that you could have done a much better job of selling yourself. If you're like many people, that feeling passes fairly quickly, and even after you fail to get the job that you interviewed for—often confirming that you really *could* have done a better interview—you probably don't give interviewing much thought until the next interview. The great irony is that, having failed to learn from your previous interviewing experiences and improving your skills, you may well be doomed to more bouts of post-interview blues in the future. However, with a little preparation, things can be different.

Doing your best at an interview is, at its most basic level, a matter of preparation that includes several steps that can easily be mastered with a little practice. While there is nothing monumental in the concepts that follow, adhering to

these very simple steps can go a long way toward helping you achieve your career goals and enjoying your work experience.

First, do some research. Before going into an interview, know as much as you can learn about the job that you are interviewing for and the organization. You can learn a lot about both by reviewing the job announcement, surfing the Internet, or simply asking others what they know. Knowledge of the job and the organization offering it, even if the job is merely in another service line, will let you tailor your responses for the best effect and will show that you are really

interested in joining the team. A small investment of time at this point can pay off in big dividends later.

Dress the part. Appearing for an interview in attire that does not meet interviewers expectations can be devastating for your chances. The best practice

is to mirror the dress that the interviewers will wear, which usually means business attire. Whatever you choose to wear, make sure that your clothing is neat, clean, pressed, and fits well. Avoid loud colors or unusual styles! You don't want interviewers distracted by what you are wearing. Instead, you want them listening to your well-honed responses.

Next, well before the interview, be sure that you know where it will take place and, if



possible, actually go to the location so that you know precisely where it is. If you can, actually go into the room and spend a few minutes. The better acclimated you are, the more comfortable you'll feel on game day. Also check out amenities such as bathroom facilities so that you can better ready to respond to last-minute emergencies such as missing buttons or needed wardrobe adjustments.

Be early for the interview! Few things will leave a lasting negative impression on interviewers like a job applicant who is late for their interview. It is much better to be a few minutes early than a few minutes late. Beware of being too early, though. While most employers appreciate an applicant who is early, especially when they are doing multiple interviews and are on a tight schedule, an applicant who arrives hours before the interview and skulks around may not only appear needy, but may freak out the staff. As a rule, get there about 15 minutes ahead of your appointed interview time. Doing so will let you relax a few minutes and get your thoughts together before the interview. And factor in drive time! The same driving route that takes 10 minutes on the weekends with little traffic could take an hour or more during the week when everyone is competing to get to their jobs. Make sure that you know how much times it will take to get to the interview location.

Be familiar with PBI. PBI is short for "performance-based interviewing," an approach to job interviews that emphasizes an applicants experience rather than presumed skills or general categories of abilities. With PBI, employers ask applicants a series of questions related to their actual experience and the applicant responds with answers that draw directly on their experience. For example, the applicant may be asked a question that begins "Tell me a bout a time that

you . . . " When asked such a question, the applicant should respond with an answer that directly addresses the question by relating something that they have actually done in the past. The answer should be like a story, with a beginning, middle, and end, and ideally should take no more than a few minutes to relate. One of the biggest mistakes that applicants make when replying to PBI questions is to fail to explicitly answer the question asked or to trail off into information that is not relevant to the question. This often happens because applicants have what they consider important details about themselves that they want the employer to know and are desperate to get

the information out. What the employer wants, however, is a direct answer, so stay focused and give them the info that they are asking for. As you do so, you can still add some of the info that you feel is important, just do it by weaving it into the narrative that answers the question asked.



As you answer questions, make sure that you smile when appropriate and make eye contact with the interviewers. As you answer, try to engage each member of the interview panel, but always finish your answer by looking at the person who asked the question. Following these seemingly basic details gives the impression that you are having a conversation with each person on the panel, thus allowing you to make a personal connection with each interviewer.

There are some other techniques to interviewing that may seem simple but that can have a tremendous impact on your potential success. First, wait to be invited into the interview room, and once invited in, wait to be seated until asked to do so. As you enter the room, immediately smile and offer to shake hands with each panel member. Try to start with the person who invited you in, as this person will usually be the chair of



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Dean Swan
Chief of Voluntary Services
478-277-2729
Aldean.Swan@va.gov



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the interview panel. Once seated, relax and wait to be addressed. Keep your hands loosely clasped in your lap, and continue to smile and make eye contact. What may seem like an eternity before being asked to speak will only be a few seconds, so don't get nervous. As you answer questions, provide the information asked for and do so with enthusiasm but be wary of talking too much. Appearing chatty or longwinded can leave a very negative impression. After the interview is over, you may be asked if you have questions. If you do, be sure to only ask pertinent questions that the panel can answer. Negotiating salaries or conditions or asking for things that the panel

can't provide will only make them ill-at-ease. Before leaving, express your desire to be a part of their team, thank the panel members for their time, and shake



hands again, then immediately leave the room. Don't run! Fleeing the room abruptly will only serve to shock the interview panelists and undo the good work that you have done.

Finally, don't forget to learn from each interview experience. Too many job applicants make the mistaken assumption that when they are not selected for a job, it had something to do with them performing poorly on the interview. While this may be true in some cases, it may not be in others. Remember that only one person can be selected for a given job, so any number of factors can play into the selection process. You may have been edged out by someone that had more education, better skills, more extensive experi-

ence, or whom the panel knew to be a team player or knew to be possessed of superior customer service skills. In any event, make the post-interview process a learning experience by asking panelists if there is anything that you can do better to develop your interview skills. Don't be surprised if panelists are reluctant or refuse to discuss your interview, but if they are willing—and many will be—listen to their advice closely and work to enhance your interviewing skills based on what they have to say. Most people will not give advice on such things if they are not sincere.

Ultimately, a résumé packed with accom-

plishments, academic degrees, certifications, and a wealth of experience may be wasted if your interview skills are not well-developed. The best way to

think of the hiring process is that the résumé is the price of admission that gets you the interview, which is where you really sell yourself as a team player with strong customer service and interpersonal skills that will make their team even better. To be your best at interviewing, do regular research and practice. It could mean the difference between the career that you want and the one you get!•

Additional resources:

<http://www.va.gov/pbi/>

CVVAMC Honors Veteran's Request for Flag

by Gregory J. Swars, Medical Media

When U.S. Navy Veteran Stanley Rodgers needed help he knew where to turn, and the CVVAMC was there.

When Stanley Rodgers noticed that the U.S. flag in front of his temporary home at the Jeffersonville Nursing and Rehabilitation Home in rural Jeffersonville, Georgia, was frayed and tattered, he decided that it needed to be replaced. After conferring with the administration at the nursing home, everyone was enthusiastic about replacing the flag but no one was exactly sure how to get started. But Rodgers was convinced that he knew where to start asking for assistance—the VA in Dublin.

Stanley Boyd Rodgers served in the U.S. Navy from 1965 until 1987 on active duty and as a reservist. He visited countries around the world and toured the world's oceans on the USS Georgetown, a technical research ship acquired by the U.S. Navy for the task of conducting research in the reception of electromagnetic propagations. Rodgers began his Navy career as an electrician, worked for a while as an aviation storekeeper, and eventually retired as a ship's servicemen petty officer second class. Even after leaving the military, however, Rodgers' interest in military and Veterans' needs did not wane. To this day, he is a member of the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) with Chapter 9 in Macon, Georgia,

and donates blood every two months. Having a long military background and involvement with Veterans issues, he considered calling the VA with his flag quandary the logical thing to do. "I knew the VA would be willing to help," Rodgers said. "Once it occurred to me to call the VA in Dublin I just looked up the number and got Dr. Jordan in Public Affairs and he went right to work." And Jordan and the VA at the Carl

Vinson VA Medical Center in Dublin, Georgia, were just as accommodating as Rodgers hoped they would be.

"When a Veteran calls with an issue or request, our immediate response is to start figuring out how we can help. Sometimes there are reasons, legal or otherwise, why we have to decline, but what we've found is that by committing to assisting our Veterans and other customers, solutions and options usually become apparent," Jordan said. "The point is that when our Veterans need us, we want to help and that attitude of wanting to find an



answer and please our Veterans make us creative."

After consulting with Jeffersonville Nursing and Rehab administrator Patty Martin and immediately gaining her enthusiastic support, Jordan started calling members of his VA team to determine what it would take to honor Mr. Rodgers' request. His first call went to longtime VA volunteer, American Legion official, and decorated



Navy Veteran Stanley Rodgers (middle) and fellow Veterans attend flag raising

Vietnam-era Army Veteran Gus Allbritton, and as Jordan expected, Allbritton was immediately onboard.

“Dr. Jordan and I regularly work closely on quite a variety of Veterans issues and needs, and this was one I wanted to help with as soon as I heard the request,” Allbritton remarked, “but we knew right away that we would need to recruit others for the effort.”

Jordan and Allbritton then got in touch with utilities foreman Daniel Knight and Voluntary Service chief Dean Swan who both came through with ideas for obtaining flags for the

nursing home, and, in short order, the flags were ready to go up. Still, the Dublin VA team wanted to add some solemnity to the occasion since it involved the ultimate American symbol and an opportunity to honor a group of America’s heroes. So, Jordan arranged with the nursing home to hold a flag raising ceremony that not only acknowledged the gravity of the occasion but recognized the service rendered by the Veterans

who reside at the facility. Through the patriotic assistance of Martin and business office manager Gwen Criswell, the ceremony was planned for May 14 at 10:00 a.m.

Jordan commended the patriotism and cooperation that the nursing home staff displayed. “When we arrived for the ceremony, we found staff that were enthusiastic about the event and were working diligently to get their Veteran residents ready to attend, and if you know anything about healthcare, preparing patients who need assistance for any outing is time-consuming and requires much attention to detail,” Jordan noted. “The healthcare staff at the Jeffersonville Nursing Home came through like true professionals,” he added.

Administrator Martin welcomed those assembled and thanked the VA for being so responsive to her Veterans’ needs. After a few brief remarks from Jordan on behalf of Dublin VA di-

rector John S. Goldman thanking the gathered Veterans for their service to the nation and the staff for their commitment to Veterans’ healthcare needs, Jordan turned the proceedings over to VA police chief Rod McNeil, a highly decorated retired Army first sergeant who served tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. Chief McNeil raised the stand-



Dr. Jordan and Chief McNeil present retired flag to nursing home administrator Patty Martin

ard assisted by Allbritton and Swan.

As Old Glory ascended into the air, the dark clouds that threatened rain parted and the sun shined through the flag giving it and the event an air of divine sanction and solemnity, just what the gathered crowd wanted to see. Those in attendance did not miss the significance and a spontaneous and collective round of applause filled the morning air.



Veterans and staff at the Jeffersonville Nursing and Rehab Home join CVVAMC staff in raising Old Glory over the facility

After the flag was raised and was wafting gently in the cool morning air with the brilliant sunshine framing its colorful aspect, everyone communed and heard stories from the elderly Veterans about their experiences while in the military. Many of the residents had no idea that their fellow patients were Veterans and began reliving the old days as they encountered Veterans wearing shirts resembling American flags and hats that identified their service era. Staff

learned who their Veteran patients were, and all left with a renewed sense of patriotism and appreciation of the country's military Veterans.

As for Stanley Rodgers, the old Navy Veteran who inspired the event by his simple desire to see a new U.S. flag flying in front of his temporary home, he was as matter-of-fact afterward as he had been when he made his request.

"I'm a Veteran," he said simply. "I knew the VA would come through." •



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VA2K 2014!

This year's VA2K "Walk & Roll" was a huge success, with Veterans, staff, and visitors well-represented. Everyone learned about fitness and healthier living and many items were collected for the support of homeless Veterans, and a variety of items were available that described VA services available to Veterans and their families. The VA2K Committee and our medical center director wishes to thank everyone who made this year's event such a wonderful success, and a special shout out to EMS, Police Service, Mr. Gus Allbritton, Engineering, and our local supporters such as Mike Wheelless and mascot from Piggly Wiggly, Kathy Noles from Citizens Bank, and Tracy Castellaw from ResCare. Let's make the 2015 VA2K the best ever and do all that we can to end Veteran homelessness and encourage Veterans and others to adopt a healthy lifestyle!



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or at risk of becoming homeless,**



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“Behind the Scenes”



QM teammate **Stephanie Mimbs** joined the CVVAMC in 2009 as a pharmacy technician. The mother of two, Dalton, 15, and Rubi-Kate, 2, and the mommy of four rescue animals, dogs Toby, Sadie, baby, and a cat Ginger, Stephanie has a number of relatives who are Veterans, including her grandfather and several uncles and cousins which has fueled her passion for her VA career. Her favorite saying is that “Every job is a self-portrait of the person who does it. Autograph your work for excellence.” Stephanie’s mother, Patricia Anderson, also works for the CVVAMC, thus making them part of a large group of medical center teammates making VA a family affair. Stephanie says that she is completely dedicated to her Veterans and their families and knew the first few weeks that she was here that being a VA professional was the career that she wanted. She identifies superior customer service as her most valuable skill.

Employee Spotlight



Jahmel Yates is the CVVAMC’s Quality Manager. A U.S. Navy Veteran, husband, and father, as well as a doctoral candidate, Jahmel sees QM’s contribution to the medical center’s mission as absolutely crucial. As a Navy corpsman, Jahmel came to understand the tremendous debt that our country owes to our Veterans and that sentiment actuates his career with the VA and our medical center. “Every team has people who are out front and many more who remain in the background,” he said. “I come to work each day knowing that the work that my team and I do is essential for ensuring that our Veterans get the very best healthcare possible, and that is all that counts for me.” Jahmel believes in the value of continuing education and is currently working diligently to obtain his PhD. The QM team is the guiding force behind our quality pursuits, a fact that Jahmel takes great pride in.

Pushups for Wounded Warriors!



A team from the CVVAMC recently participated in an event to support wounded warriors. Held at Clark's Health Club in Dublin, Georgia, teams did as many pushups in 90 seconds as possible, with each pushup receiving a donation from sponsors. Recreation specialist **Todd Spees** knocked out 237, Engineering pro **Clint Luecke** posted 154, IT champ **Shannon Canady** put up 147, and team captain **Harvey Padgett** from Engineering represented with a staggering 275 pushups! (Extra points if you can guess Harvey's age. Trust me, he is an inspiration to the rest of us!) The team's total was 2,036. Thank you to these outstanding VA professionals who serve their Veterans even on their own time!



Team captain Harvey Padgett, CVVAMC Electric Shop supervisor, and teammate Clint Luecke encourage Big Todd Spees as he pounds out pushups for wounded warriors!

Veteran Spotlight

“Only a Couple of Rough Days ...”

A Dublin WWII Veteran’s Remembrance of His Combat Experience

by Dr. Frank G. Jordan Jr., Public Affairs

Personal perspectives are interesting things and are definitely unique. In this article, read why one Dublin World War II Veteran’s perspective on his combat experience helps to illustrate why we call him and his fellows the Greatest Generation.

“During the War, I only had a couple of rough days,” said World War II Marine Corps Veteran Chandler Maurice Beasley Sr. in a recent interview. Yet, what constitutes a “couple of rough days” for most of us is likely at odds with Beasley’s own conception.

Now 90 years old, Beasley joined the U.S. Marine Corps in 1942 at age 18 and, after completing boot camp in San Diego, quickly found himself patrolling the South Pacific after the start of World War II. As a member of VMF (N) 542, the Night Fighters, which flew the F6F Hellcat fighter, Beasley saw many of the islands of the region, an especially rewarding experience for a Georgia boy who had not previously left his

home state. Still, how he remembers the time may be the most interesting aspect of his experience.

“It was good duty,” Beasley recalls. “I saw things and met interesting people. I can’t complain.”

What Beasley fails to emphasize in recounting his World War II combat experience is the nature of the dangers that he and his comrades faced. When pressed, he admits that straf-

ing by enemy planes was often a daily occurrence and that later in the war Japanese planes often attacked islands where Beasley was stationed, incidents that would, even in the unsophisticated mind, constitute some serious combat.

Beasley has a different perspective.

“We got used to that kind of stuff,” he

remembered, referring to the aerial attacks. “But there were a couple of days that got pretty rough.”

With that opening understatement, Beasley described several days during the battle of Okinawa when his unit was under attack from enemy aircraft. Already used to such happenings—although one wonders how anyone could



Command Sgt. Major Beasley

get used to such things—Beasley recalled the day that a Japanese plane landed on the island and came to rest just a few hundred yards from his squad's position. The plane was near the foxhole where now Technical Sergeant Beasley's troops were sheltering.

Under other circumstances, Technical Sgt. Beasley might have been a little less concerned than he was. Unfortunately, he knew something about the situation that the enemy did not, a fact that probably saved many lives that day.

"We had gotten lax," Beasley said. "We'd gotten so used to the planes shooting at us and not seeing any ground action that after a while we stopped carrying our weapons." That bad habit would prove an issue.

As it happened, when the enemy plane landed, Beasley was away from his squad's foxhole and immediately recognized the severity of the danger. Running as fast as he could to the main encampment, he grabbed the first officer that he could find and apprised him of what was happening. On hearing what had occurred, the lieutenant that Beasley found immediately opened the weapons locker, tossed Beasley a Thompson's machine gun, grabbed one himself, and the two were off to the landing sight to rescue Beasley's beleaguered squad.

The battle that ensued was ferocious. Ultimately, approximately 30 Japanese fighters were killed as they exited the downed aircraft, each wearing mines strapped to their bodies. Technical Sgt. Beasley, the lieutenant, and other members of their squadron were able to rescue the pinned down troops. The way Beasley saw it, this was his first actual combat experience because it was the first time that he had shot at an enemy that he could see and who was actually shooting back at him. For Beasley, that was combat. Over the next several days, the young technical sergeant saw a lot of combat, including seeing two of his fellow Marines killed when a mortar landed in a foxhole that they had been shar-

ing and from which he had just exited.

After the Battle of Okinawa ended, Beasley spent a few weeks in Yokosuka, Japan, and then caught a ride back to the States on the aircraft carrier USS Altamaha. As if his wartime experiences weren't adventure enough, getting back to Georgia proved to be nearly as trying. On arrival in Los Angeles, the newly discharged Beasley and some of his fellow Marines found getting a train out of town to be almost impossible. With lines at train stations backed up for several blocks, Beasley and his fellow Veterans even considered stealing a car to get out of the state. The plan was to drive it to another state and catch a train. They planned to leave a note with money, but ultimately decided on a more lawful approach. Each of them paid a friendly driver \$75 for a ride to Chicago where, after a few days of R&R, Beasley caught a flight to Atlanta.

On arrival back in the Peach State, Beasley decided that the things that he had missed most after his family were hunting and fishing, so, he hunted and he fished—for a long time.



"I got a lot of job offers," Beasley remembers, "but I just wasn't ready, so I kept on huntin' and fishin'."

The recent Veteran enjoyed his beloved leisure activities from the time he was discharged in late December until the end of March, when he decided it was time to work. (His parents added some gentle but loving persuasion.) What followed were several jobs in various areas of interest until he landed the job that he coveted most, being a rural mail carrier, a job that he kept for 25 years and retired from in 1979.

But his service to his country did not end with his discharge after World War II. In 1954, Beasley became a service member once again by enlisting in the U.S. Army Reserve. Later, he was integral to the founding of the first local National Guard unit and ultimately became its command sergeant major, retiring from the service after 30 years. Even now, though, Beasley recalls his service to the nation with the clarity of the 21 year-old technical sergeant who spent time in the South Pacific so many decades ago, and he has kept track of old war buddies. In the late 1960s, Beasley and his Marine Corps brothers began having annual reunions where they talked about old times and continued to support each other.

As busy as Beasley was after the war, he took the time to fall in love and have a family, marrying his wife Betty shortly after returning home. He and Betty had four sons and Beasley

now has eight grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

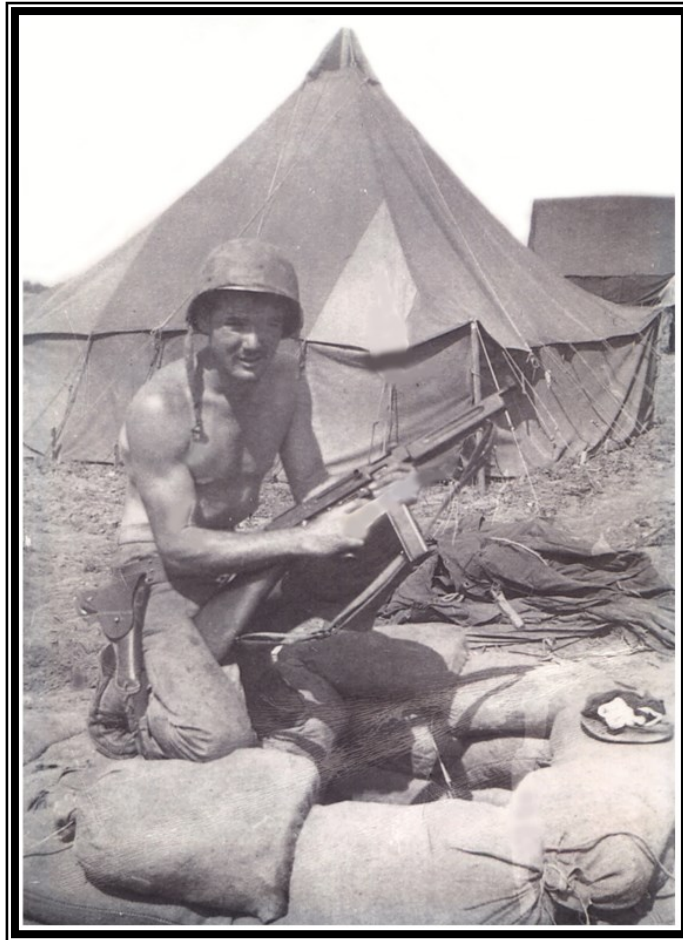
Notwithstanding the full life that he has led and all the years that Beasley devoted to military service, in a very real way, his service continues. Now a resident at the Carl Vinson VA Medical Center since 2010, the retired command sergeant major is often called upon to offer advice on matters related to military service and Veterans' issues, such as a trip to Ft. Stewart a few years ago to speak to returning Army troops

leaving the military after service in Iraq and Afghanistan. Many around the Dublin VA medical center still refer to him as sergeant major, and Beasley still fits the bill, greeting people that he meets with the booming voice and confident attitude that immediately commands respect.

And he sees his residence at the medical center as being at home. As a 10 year-old, he often played on the property when it was the Rice family plantation, a cotton growing farm, and after leaving the Marine Corps, he had his appendix removed by a VA doctor

in Dublin. Beasley enjoys the respect that a war hero and Veteran should receive in his new home, even though he does not see himself as any kind of hero. Again, he was humble if maybe a little unrealistic about his service:

"Like I said, the whole time I was in the War, I only had a couple of rough days." •



Beasley on Okinawa, May 25, 1944, while serving in the U.S. Marine Corps



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22	23	24	25	26	27	28
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Know Your Nurse!

Michelle Plummer, NA

by Anita Shepherd, RN, MSN



Michelle Plummer, restorative aide, has been an extremely valuable asset to the Carl Vinson VA Medical Center for the past 25 years. An exceptionally dedicated and outstanding restorative nursing assistant and VA employee, Michelle provides in-service

teaching, seeks out educational opportunities to enhance her knowledge on Restorative, Spinal Cord Injury, and overall nursing care as well furnishing staff training at nursing education fairs.

For example, Plummer serves on the SCI training team, educating all new hires and the nursing staff hospital-wide on care and knowledge of SCI patients. She is also an active member for Safe Patient Handling Committee, Dementia Committee, and assist Patient Safety Officer with Root Cause Analysis (RCA). Michelle completed training and education for the care of dementia patients and received an Alzheimer's Foundation of America (AFA) Qualified Dementia Care Provider Certification.

Annually, she attends the National Wheelchair Games as well volunteers and assist Recreational Therapy with resident attending off-station events, funerals, and outings. She created a mission statement as well as vision statement for the

Restorative Nursing Program and she designed a scrub uniform for the National Fall Prevention image 'Don't Fall Let Me Help You'. Michelle has also served as a controlled substance inspector.' A VHA mentor for new CLC staff, Michelle recognizes the supreme importance of sharing knowledge and experience. She uses her positive attitude, dependability, and professionalism to honor Veterans' service and empower their health.

Michelle attends trainings such as Innovations in Reducing Falls, Incidents & Injury, and serves as a member of Fall Precaution Team as well as National Falls Breakthrough Series team. Plummer is an exceptional example of a team-player, maintains safety precautions, motivates and assists other staff members to achieve their work goals, has a great rapport with all and goes above and beyond in any career interaction. Michelle receives many positive personal praise and recognition comments from patients, family members, managers, physicians, and peers on her diverse professional service, dedication and commitment to Restorative Nursing.

Cautious of safety checks and safety goals for residents, co-workers, and self Michelle is compassionate, energetic, enthusiastic and a remarkable asset to Restorative Nursing and the CVVAMC. Ms. Michelle performs in an optimal manner in every area of her nursing role and we should be proud to work with such a meticulous professional coworker. Please share congratulations with her on her years of care and service to our facility, the Restorative Nursing program, and to our Veterans. •

VA Police Receive Training in Mental Health Interventions

by Dr. Frank G. Jordan Jr., VHA-CM

Policing in the 21st century VA requires knowing the psychological issues that Veterans contend with, and the CVVAMC Police are training to learn how to deal with mental health issues that affect their Veterans.

Carl Vinson VA Medical Center police officers have completed training intended to help them more effectively respond to incidents involving persons in mental health crisis.

The training, mandated by the VA's Deputy Under Secretary for Health Operations and Management, was designed in collaboration with VA's Veterans Justice Outreach program, Mental Health division, and the VA Law Enforcement

Training Center. The interdisciplinary training was structured so that VA police officers would benefit from knowledge in a variety of disciplines drawing from areas as diverse as psychology, social work, and criminal justice. Designed to complement VA's new Veterans Justice Outreach program which seeks to assist veterans

who have become involved with the criminal justice system, the VA deputy secretary has mandated that all VA police officers complete the training by June of this year. According to Chief Rod McNeil who runs the Dublin VA Police Department and served as an instructor, the new training initiative is timely.

"Police officers regularly come into contact with people in mental health crisis, so being prepared is smart for everyone in the profession," he said. "In our case, the training is exceptionally important because we know that many of our

Veterans will return with mental health concerns that our VA police will encounter virtually every day. By making it a multi-disciplinary approach, we know that our officers will have the training needed to help keep the focus where it belongs, on getting our veterans to the healthcare that they



CVVAMC police officers learn how to deal with mental health issues facing Veterans

need."

Dublin VA Mental Health director Dr. Matthew Geyer affirmed McNeil's remarks. "In the past, VA Police and VA Mental Health have sometimes appeared to operate with different objectives in mind. Although we've always enjoyed a strong collaborative arrangement, ambiguity



Social worker Candace Shepherd instructs VA Police in mental health intervention techniques

would sometimes get in the way of ensuring the best approach toward meeting veterans' needs. This new training not only gives our police the skills that they need, it installs a more cohesive and comprehensive approach for responding to veterans in mental health crisis."

McNeil and his assistant chief, Captain Torrance Jones, received training as instructors before teaching their police officers and were assisted by

Dublin VA social workers Candace Shepherd and Sally Watson-Hall. The 4-day training taught Dublin VA police officers how to identify people who might be in mental

health crisis, de-escalation and conflict resolution skills, and techniques and strategies for successfully resolving incidents. The officers were also provided additional resources for assisting veter-

ans and others experiencing difficulties related to mental health issues. Working collaboratively with other agencies and professions for the best outcomes was emphasized.

VA police sergeant Verlis Pooler, himself a veteran, was impressed with the training. "We've always worked hard to get our veterans to the healthcare that they need," Pooler said, referring to his police department, "but this training gave us critical skills that we need to get the best resolutions. This may be the best training I've had as a police officer."

McNeil said that this initial training is just the beginning and that the process for educating his police officers in mental health interventions will be continually revised and refined as more is learned about dealing with persons in mental health crisis and veterans' evolving needs.

"One thing you learn early as a police officer is that constant training is mandatory if you want to remain current, and in our police de-

partment, we insist on remaining current," McNeil explained. "Few issues that VA police officers deal with are as critical as interacting effectively with veterans in mental health crisis. In the end,



Chief McNeil discusses the implications of Veterans mental health needs with his officers

we owe it to them to be as prepared as we possibly can be so that we can honor their service and empower their health." •

Living the Dream

by Gregory J. Swars, Medical Media

For U.S. Army Veteran and athlete Keith Thompson, competing again is a dream come true.

Last year I had the distinct honor of accompanying our Veteran athletes to the 33rd National Veteran Wheelchair Games in Tampa, Fla. The experiences left me overcome with emotions as I watched these dedicated athletes put everything they had into the competition.

Most of them could do more in a wheelchair—or out of—than I could do standing. I had the opportunity to make some great friends. One of those was U. S. Army Veteran Keith Thompson from Sandersville, Ga., who

told me an inspiring story I want to share.

Keith served in the Army National Guard from 1989 to 2001. He was a Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Quartermaster, truck driver and a combat engineer. He got out of the Guard as an E-4/Specialist. Like most Veterans, he enjoyed the camaraderie of serving his country with his fellow Veterans. Once he left the service, he continued to serve but in a different capacity, this time as a firefighter in his hometown of Sandersville. He was one of the engineers that ran the equipment to help fight the fires and did this until

2006 when tragedy struck.

On August 30, 2006, Keith was involved in a motorcycle accident that left him paralyzed from the waist down. As would be expected from someone who had led an active lifestyle, Keith went through a period of depression during his recovery. “I was in a really bad place when I was told I’d never walk again. It was really hard for me because I went from helping people to having to be helped by people,” Keith

said. His recovery went well into late 2007, though he still had some issues with his injuries which kept him from working. Yet he found significant comfort doing volunteer work. He volunteered in the community at the Boys and Girls Club, his

church, and even assisted on a political campaign.

In 2012, while visiting the Carl Vinson VAMC to apply for benefits, he was approached by recreation therapist and Adaptive Sports Coordinator for the facility, Charlene James, who was recruiting Veterans to participate in the National Veteran Wheelchair Games (NVWG) being held in Richmond, VA that June. Noting his athletic appearance, she gave him a brochure and encouraged him to consider participating. Keith eagerly seized the opportunity to be compete



again, and in Richmond, Keith medaled in three events.

Although he did not medal in the Games in 2013, he served as an inspiration to the other athletes giving tips to VA athletes and even their competitors. Asked how the Adaptive Sports Program has helped him, he replied that "It has helped me dramatically. To be able to participate and compete has been a dream come true. It helps me to live a healthy and active life. I have made new friends from all over the world and the camaraderie that I had in the military is prevalent at these events. My life has taken on new meaning." His wife of 13 years, Janice, has been with him through the good and the bad. "Janice has been my rock. She is my motivation and my strongest supporter. She constantly encourages me to live an active lifestyle and participate in these events."

The NVWG opened the floodgates for Keith. Since competing for the first time, he has participated in events around the country with Blaze Sports, Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), and Bulldog Archery. Keith is also a member of the PVA Hand Cycling Team and



Thompson competes in hand cycle event

went to Edmond, Oklahoma, to the US Paralympic training site where he received coaching and training tips in sitting volleyball, archery, and hand cycling, and in July, he is going to the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago for additional training for disabled military service members. And

all of this before he travels with Team Dublin to Philadelphia for the National Veteran Wheelchair Games in August.

Handicapped Army Veteran Keith Thompson is a "hometown hero" who continues to serve by inspiring disabled Veterans to take charge of their lives and situations by showing that if you take the "dis" from disability, you have the ability to "live the dream." His bravery and fortitude stand as model attributes for all persons, not just disabled Veterans.

What a world it would be if each of us could benefit from the fine example that Keith provides. Good Luck to Keith and all of our Veteran athletes competing in the Golden Age Games and the National Veteran Wheelchair Games, and thank you for providing a stellar example that we can all emulate!•



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What If I Said You Could Add Up To Ten Years To Your Life By Changing Your Diet?

by Cid Chavez MSS, MS, RD, LD

How much is 10 years of life worth to you? This article will make you think and help you prepare for a longer, healthier life!

A long healthy life is no accident. It begins with good genes, but it also depends on good habits. If you adopt the right life-style, experts say, chances are you may live up to a decade longer. So what's the formula for success?

In recent years researchers have fanned out across the globe to find the secrets to long life. Funded in part by the U.S. National Institute on Aging, scientists have focused on several regions where people live significantly longer. In Sardinia, Italy, one team of demographers found a hot spot of longevity in mountain villages where men reach age 100 at an amazing rate. On the islands of Okinawa, Japan, another team examined a group that is among the longest lived on Earth. In Loma Linda, California, researchers studied a group of Seventh-day Adventists who rank among America's longevity all-stars. Residents of these three places produce a high rate of centenarians, suffer a fraction of the

diseases that commonly kill people in other parts of the developed world, and enjoy more healthy years of life. In sum, they offer three sets of "best practices" to emulate. The rest is up to you. What makes these groups so fortunate? A growing body of evidence suggests that diet is one of the important contributors to longevity and healthy living. Here's what's on the menu of people who enjoy long and healthy lives.



Foods for a Healthy Heart

Most of us know to go easy on saturated fat, the kind found in meat and high-fat dairy products. Saturated fats have been shown to raise blood cholesterol levels into the danger zone. Just as important is what you should be eating. For heart health and longevity, you should eat:

Plenty of fruits and vegetables: Packed with fiber and nutrients, fruits and vegetables are also relatively low in calories. Studies consistently show that diets plentiful in fruits and vegetables help people maintain a healthy weight and protect against cardiovascular disease.

Whole grains: Like fruits and vegetables, whole grains pack a lot of nutrition into a low-calorie package. Grains like oats and barley are

also rich in a long list of disease-fighting compounds. In 2009, researchers at the University of Texas Health Sciences Center in Houston reported that study participants whose diets included plenty of whole grains and fruit cut their heart disease risk by almost half compared to those whose diets favored meat and fatty foods. Findings from more than 161,000 nurses enrolled in the Nurses' Health Study also show that whole grains protect against type 2 diabetes; a disease that increases the danger of heart disease.

Nuts: For too long, nuts were banished from the list of healthy foods because they're high in fat. They are. But the fat they contain is mostly unsaturated, which protects against heart disease. However, the recommended serving size for nuts is 1 ounce or about 28 peanuts. How many people eat a 6 ounce can of nuts and realize that they have just consumed more than 1,000 calories?

Dark chocolate: Researchers now think that high blood pressure and heart disease are exceedingly rare among residents of the San Blas islands because they eat chocolate, and lots of it. Components in dark chocolate called polyphenols are believed to lower blood pressure and improve the flexibility of blood vessels. In a 2008 study, researchers at the University of Aquila gave volunteers with hypertension 100 grams of dark chocolate daily. After 15 days, their blood pressure readings were significantly lower and their insulin sensitivity had improved.

Foods for a Vital Brain

The basic advice is simple: What's good for your heart and blood vessels is also good for

your brain. That means eating a diet centered on fruits and vegetables with plenty of unsaturated oils, such as olive oil, and plenty of whole grains. Foods that may add extra protection include:

Blueberries and other antioxidant-rich fruits:

Ongoing research at the Jean Mayer Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts University suggests that foods especially high in antioxidants, including blueberries, grape juice, and walnuts, protect against age-related changes in the brain that lead to memory loss and even dementia.

Fish: High in omega-3 fats, fish and shell-

fish have been shown to protect against irregular heart rhythms than can lead to heart failure. New evidence suggests that in addition to heart protection, the fatty acids, such as DHA and EPA, found in fish oil (and ALA found in flaxseed) may offer a defense against depression and age-related memory loss.

Low-salt foods: Researchers have known for years that less salt in the diet means lower blood

pressure. Now new evidence suggests that keeping blood pressure down may also protect brain cells and decrease the risk of age-related memory loss and even dementia. "High blood pressure can damage the vasculature that supplies the brain with oxygen and nutrients," explains Tufts University neuroscientist Aron Troen, PhD. That may explain why people with chronic hypertension seem to be at higher risk of developing age-related cognitive impairments.

Coffee: A growing number of studies suggest that coffee has several surprising health benefits. In addition to potentially lowering the risk



of type 2 diabetes, drinking coffee may reduce the risk of age-related mental decline. The latest evidence comes from a Finish study of 1,409 volunteers published in the Journal of Alzheimer's Disease in 2009. It found that people who regularly drank coffee during their middle-aged years were significantly less likely to suffer dementia and Alzheimer's later in life. Those who drank three to five cups daily had a 65% reduction in risk.

Foods for Strong Bones

Bone loss and osteoporosis are among the leading reasons for disability in later life. And once seniors become disabled, their health often declines in many other ways. Although some bone loss with age is inevitable, eating foods rich in calcium and vitamin D can slow the process and prevent disabling fractures. Among the top choices:

Low-fat dairy products: "The body needs vitamin D in order to absorb calcium," says Robert P Heaney, MD, a leading expert on osteoporosis. "But adequate levels of protein are also necessary to keep bones strong." For that reason, he argues, dairy products like milk and yogurt are the best sources of calcium because they contain the full array of nutrients needed for healthy bones.

Dark green leafy vegetables: Collard greens, spinach, and broccoli are good sources of calcium.

Tofu: Look for brands made with calcium sulfate, which contain the highest levels of calcium. A half-cup contains about 250 milligrams of calcium. (Adult women should consume about 1500 milligrams a day, according to Heaney.) Unfortunately, getting enough vitamin D turns out to be trickier than getting enough calcium. Although many foods are fortified with vitamin D, diet alone isn't able to provide enough. Our skin converts sunlight to vitamin D; but with age, that

process becomes less efficient. (During the winter months in most parts of the United States, the sun is too weak to generate vitamin D production.) While experts continue to debate the optimal levels of vitamin D, Heaney recommends taking 1,000 to 2,000 international units (IU) a day in supplement form. Boosting vitamin D is particularly important as you get older, he points out, since the skin becomes less efficient at generating this crucial nutrient from sunlight. "Even your skin will stay younger-looking if you eat right," says Allison T. Pontius, MD, an expert in anti-aging and regenerative medicine at Williams Center for Plastic Surgery in Latham, NY. Interestingly, many of the above foods listed above; i.e. fruits, vegetables, fish, whole-grains, nuts, and dairy that are components of a diet for longevity are also vital to keeping your skin younger looking.

Beyond Nutrients: The Joy of Eating

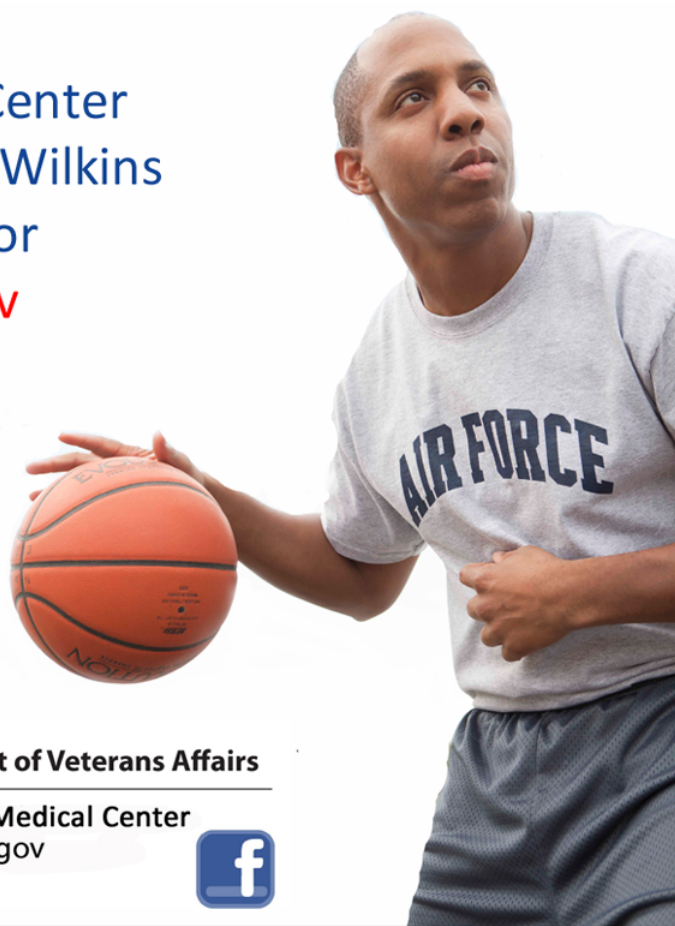
A diet abundant in nutrients is obviously important to longevity, as described above. So is enjoying what you eat-- and especially finding joy in sitting down to meals with family and friends. Studies of centenarians the world over suggest that social connections and finding meaning in life are both crucial to longevity. The long-lived people of Okinawa say one reason they enjoy long and healthy lives is something they call *ikigai*, or "finding your reason to live." •





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Carl Vinson VA Medical Center
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To become the finest VAMC we can possibly be and ensure that we keep our nation's promise to Veterans means that we must celebrate our successes, and an important part of that is taking the time to thank individuals and services for their efforts. So, on behalf of myself and our entire team, thank you, and please keep up the great work!


Medical Center Director



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Amelia Sumner, Coding
Angela Edwards, Logistics
Anita Shepherd, MSN, RN, Nursing
Anthony Jackson, Domiciliary
Anthony Margiotta, Social Work
Audrea Wright
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Regina Conner, Coding
Retha Walker, Coding
Robert Hammond, Logistics
Ronald Johnson, Voc Rehab
Ronald Slappy, EMS
Russell Thompson, Primary Care
Sabrina Thorpe, Patient Advocate

Sabrina Wright, Logistics
Sallie McClain, Mental Health x 2!
Sam Barron, IT x 2!
Samantha Logue, Dental
Sandra Terry, Coding
Santhamma Joseph, RN, Nursing
Sara Lovett, Logistics
Sheara Tillman, RN, Nursing
Sheila McKinley, Coding
Sherry Thomas, Safety
Shirell Corbett, Business Office
Starkesha Harris, Mental Health
Sue Marrine, Care Coordination
Susan Haywood, Voluntary x 4!
Susie Cheney, Chief of Logistics x 3!

Sylvia Wade, Coding
Teresa Smith, Canteen x 2!
Terrineya Burnett, Nursing
Tony Robinson, Logistics
Valerie Spencer, NP, Primary Care
Vicki Clark, Logistics
Vicki Coleman, Coding
Walter Cooper, Logistics
Wanda Aaron, Nursing
Wayne Cannady, Primary Care
Willie Grayer, Logistics
Willie Reid, EMS
Willie Youngblood, EMS
Willynda Calhoun, RN, Milledgeville CBOC



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Around the VA . . .



Hospital Week



Torch Run



Memorial Day



Kindness

by Chaplain Sam Scaggs

Wherever there is a human being, there is an opportunity for kindness. ~Seneca

Recently I have been a recipient of kindness here at our wonderful Carl Vinson VAMC...tremendous kindness and it has blessed my life beyond measure. It is humbling when you receive love from others, and it is inspiring to live the very same. In times of need, sorrow, desperation, loneliness, any and all emotions, a kind word, gesture, or presence can make all the difference in the world.

Kindness is one of the seven virtues. It can be defined as the righteous and caring attitude shown by humanity. The beauty of kindness is that it gives so much to both the giver and recipient. What a joy it is to be kind. I have had the distinct honor of visiting many foreign countries where I spoke not a word of the local language, yet through acts of kindness I was able to communicate on a deep and meaningful level. All of humanity recognizes kindness. Kindness is a universal language and is a powerful gesture that can transcend barriers, wounded hearts, and the most desperate of times.

I have spoken with many Veterans and listened as they recalled acts of kindness they have showed to locals (especially children) during times of conflict. A simple gift of candy, a photo, a warm smile all produced joy and peace in the hearts of many of the recipients. Here at the Carl Vinson VAMC I see Veterans displaying acts of kindness on a daily basis. A helpful push to an appointment, a comforting word when one is displaying heartache, helping carry items out to a vehicle, all have been witnessed by myself and each act of kindness brought smiles, tears, and peace into the lives of the recipients. May we all esteem to live as such, both here and outside the grounds of our VAMC.

Another important aspect of kindness is the kindness we show to ourselves. When reflecting on my own life, nobody can be harder on myself than I. Are you this way as well...using unhealthy dialogue as a motivation? We are imperfect beings. We make mistakes. I know I have made many over the years but what I must reflect upon are the words of a Chaplain mentor of mine. During times where I was especially hard on myself my mentor would say, "Sam, be kind to yourself! Give yourself the very Grace that you bestow to others. A hurting heart, your hearting heart, needs your kindness." Through our mistakes we learn how to live. What a beautiful way to approach life, with a sense of Grace not only for others, but foremost ourselves.

Kindness, a seemingly easy idea but one that takes a lifetime to perfect. This is daily life work and it is a worthy endeavor. Our world is crying for kindness, will you be an agent of loving change? Our lives are crying out for kindness, can you love yourself enough to provide the Grace to make it through the tough times? We can do it! Within us resides all the power needed to access kindness. This power is rooted in our mind, body, and spirit. May we tap into it and do something great for all creation!•

Peace, Chaplain Sam Scaggs



HONORING SERVICE
EMPOWERING
HEALTH

Do you recognize this logo? We hope so, because it is emblematic of VA's commitment to providing personalized, proactive, patient-driven healthcare to our Veterans and represents the new paradigm of patient-centered care that makes the patient an empowered member of the healthcare team. We ask that all CVVAMC teammates learn to recognize this symbol of excellence and think about what it stands for, *honoring service* and *empowering health*. By internalizing this concept, VA will remain the healthcare provider of choice for Veterans and will continue to honor the sacrifices that our military forces make for our great nation. Thank you, and please keep up the good work!

CVVAMC Blast from the Past!



Telegraph Staff Photo by George Landry

TWO OF THE OLDEST veterans at Dublin VA center are William R. Thompson, 95, left; and John O. Duncan, 94, enjoying lunch. They are Spanish-American War veterans.

Important Events

Happening in June . . .

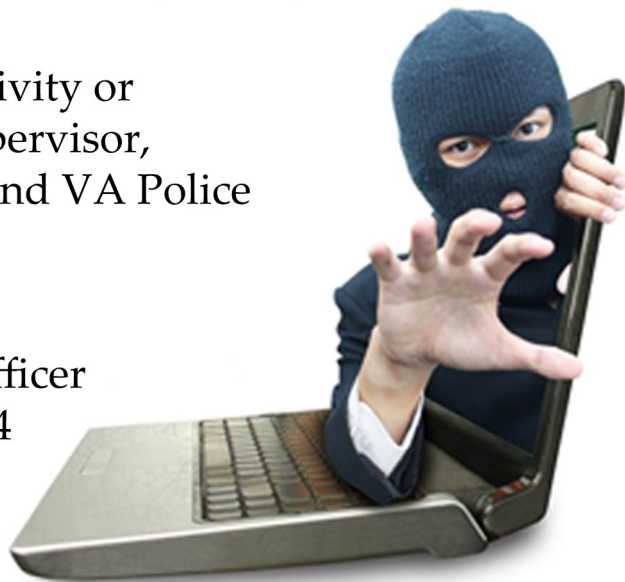
- D-Day Anniversary, June 6
- U.S. Army Birthday (1775), June 14
- National Veterans Golden Age Games, June 28-July 3
- National Safety Month
- LGBT Awareness Month

Be alert... be aware... be committed.

Protecting our Veterans' privacy and healthcare information is *everyone's* job.

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CVVAMC Privacy Officer
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VA



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“Every day I know
that what I do contrib-
utes to Veterans’
healthcare. Nothing
feels better than serv-
ing America’s heroes.”

- Sam Williams, EMS

